

## Andrew Jackson to Henry McKinney, May 10, 1802, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### TO COLONEL MCKINNEY.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colonel McKinney seems to have commanded the militia of Jackson County.

Hunters Hill, May 10, 1802 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This letter was one of Jackson's first official actions as major-general of militia. It illustrates his manner of transacting his official duties and his sense of fairness to the Indians. On the same day, May 10, he wrote to Winchester, within whose brigade was the offending Major Russell, and ordered a strict investigation, with punishment if guilt was proved. Major Russell lived near the point where the road from East to West Tennessee plunges into the "Wilderness" going east. This unsettled region was not acquired from the Cherokees until 1805. (Cf. F. A. Michaux, *Travels*, p. 212.)

*Sir* , On the 7th instant I recd a letter from Governor Roane, stating information recd. of an unwarrentable murder committed on an Indian in your county. it further states, that one of your Major[s] (Russle) has raised a party or is about so to do with an intent to search out some camps of Indians in the mountains over our boundery and break them up. The militia are considered to be the bulwark of our national peace prosperity and happiness, and for an officer thus to violate the law and hazard the peace of our country, is such an example to those of a lower grade, that it ought and must meet, with a speedy corrective.

I have to request that you make strict inquiry into those facts relative to the late conduct of Major Russle, If he has not carried his plan into execution, and you have information that can be relied on that he intends it, you will command him to desist, and should he

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be hardy enough to disobay your orders, and proceed to violate the laws of the land I command you immediately to arrest him, and to furnish Brigadier genrl. Winchester with the charges against him so that a court martial may be called and a speedy inquiry had into his conduct. If he has progressed in his illegal enterprise, and you can procure proof of the facts, you are hereby required also to arrest him. The respectability of the militia require it, and the peace and tranquility of our country imperiously commands, that such unofficer like conduct should be punished. The pride of a good officer and a wish for subordination and discipline in his corps will always be a sufficient incentive to him to obey the orders of his superior and act consistant with the law of land. where that is not the case the good of the Service and the respectability of the militia require a corrective—by inquiry and casheering. I flatter myself, from your well-known military experience, that you will be vigilant in your enquiries and to the utmost of your power preserve the tranquility of your county by arresting and bringing to trial all officers under your command who act inconsistant with their duty as officers. your county being on the Frontier place your citizens in a dangerous situation, and the unwarrentable act of killing the Indian lately may involve in it the lives of a number of the innocent, I am truly surprised that the civil authority has not taken some notice of the act by trying to find out the perpetrator and bringing him to Justice. I do hope the good citizens will notice the thing in a proper manner.

With respect and Esteem yr mo. ob. serv.